

# ALASKA INJURY FACTS



Division of Public Health  
Department of Health & Social Services

No. 1, Injury Disparities in Alaska  
May 2003

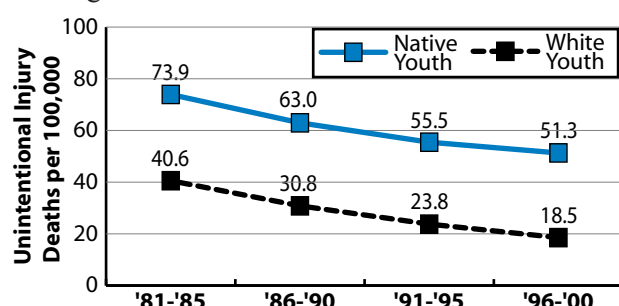
## What are “Disparities?”

“Disparities” are “differences that occur by gender, race or ethnicity, education or income, disability, living in rural locations or sexual orientation.” (*Healthy People 2010*) Conceptually, “disparities” can be separated into “unavoidable” and “potentially avoidable” disparities. Many potentially avoidable disparities are deemed to be unacceptable or unfair, especially when they are related to unequal access to information or care.

The most obvious **disparities in injury prevalence and death rates** in Alaska are between Alaska Natives and the population as a whole. A grant from the Bureau of Maternal and Child Health of the USDHHS provided for analysis of injury hospitalization data (1994-1999) and injury death data (1981-2000). This has been an opportunity to examine trends in both rates and rate disparities over twenty years. The picture that emerges is a complex one, composed of both encouraging decreases in injury rates and the troubling persistence of (and some increases in) disparities. Selected highlights follow.

### Good News<sup>1</sup>

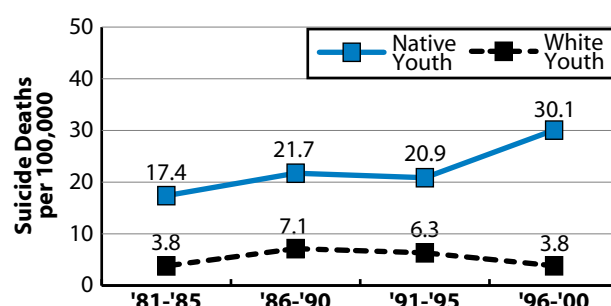
- One very encouraging trend is the reduction in unintentional injury death rates for men, women and children. As the graph below shows, unintentional injury death rates among those 0-19 have steadily declined among both Natives and Whites.



- Homicide death rates have dropped among both men and women over 20 years of age.
- Furthermore, racial (Native-to-White) disparities in homicide rates have dropped considerably among youth, and men and women 20-44.

### Bad News<sup>1</sup>

- Suicide rates have not declined over the 20-year period among men over 19 and women over 44, and have even increased slightly among both youth and women 20-44. Even more troubling is the increase in the racial disparity in youth suicide rates.



- Although unintentional injury death rates have declined, regional disparities still remain, particularly among youth and young adult women.
- There has been no decrease in homicide death rates among Alaskans 0-19 years of age.

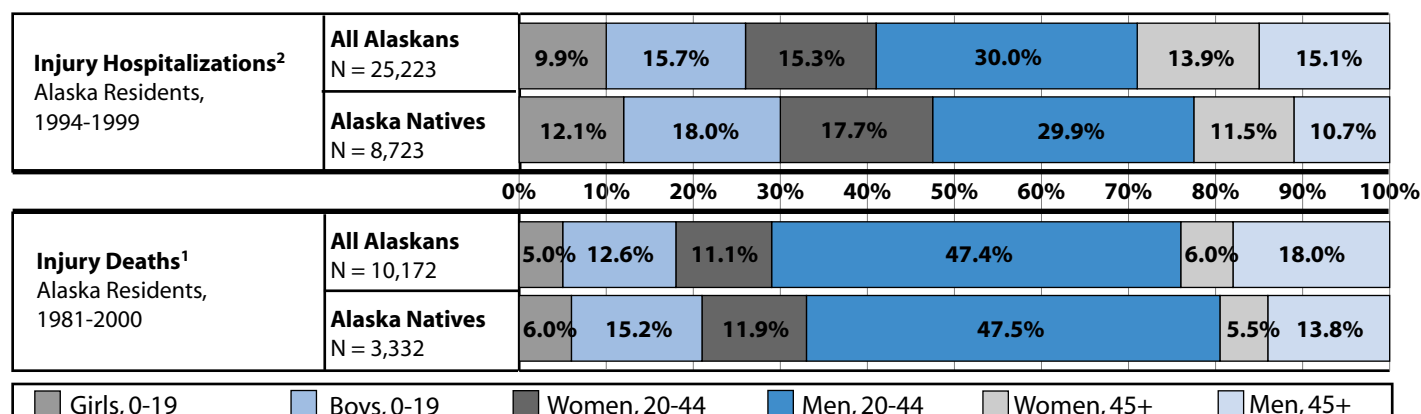
## Healthy Alaskans 2010 and Injury Disparities

*Healthy Alaskans 2010* (Alaska’s current health plan) has the same overarching goals as the national *Healthy People 2010* goals: (1) Increase quality and years of healthy life, and (2) Eliminate health disparities.

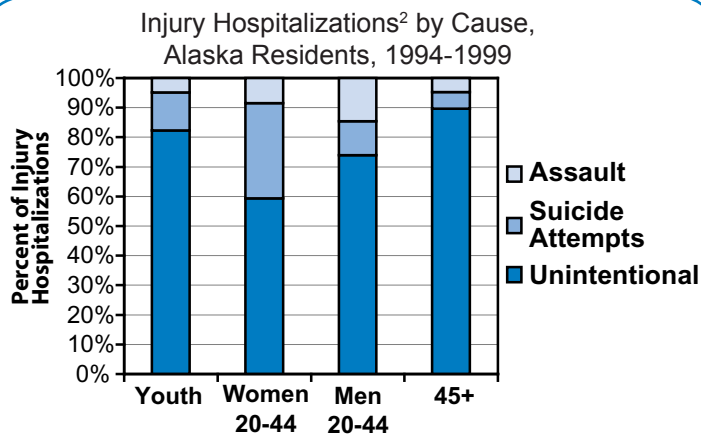
- Unintentional injury death rates are **twice as high** for Alaska Natives as for the population as a whole (119.9 per 100,000 vs. 56.1 per 100,000). **Healthy Alaskans 2010 Targets: 31.4 per 100,000, and Eliminate Disparity**
- For Alaska Native children 0-19 years old, the unintentional injury death rate is **2.4 times** the overall rate (36.1 per 100,000 vs. 15.1 per 100,000). **Healthy Alaskans 2010 Targets: 9.9 per 100,000, and Eliminate Disparity**
- Drowning death rates for Alaska Natives are **three times higher** than for all Alaskans (20.8 per 100,000 vs. 7.0 per 100,000). **Healthy Alaskans 2010 Targets: 1.5 per 100,000, and Eliminate Disparity**
- Alaska Native motor vehicle death rates are **almost double** the statewide rate (27.6 per 100,000 vs. 14.7 per 100,000) – and for all groups they account for about one quarter of all unintentional injury deaths. **Healthy Alaskans 2010 Targets: 7.0 per 100,000, and Eliminate Disparity**

## The Burden of Injury and Injury Disparities

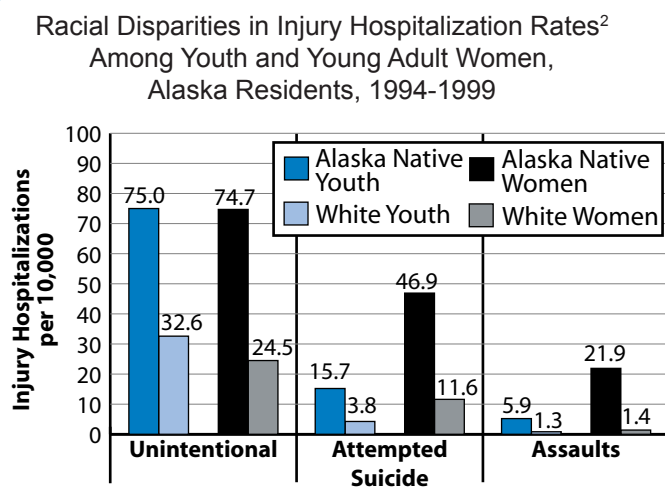
Injuries (including unintentional, suicide and homicide) are the leading cause of death for Alaska Natives, accounting for 24.6% of all deaths in 1999. For Whites, they account for 13.6% of total deaths; for all Alaskans, 16.3% (1999 data). Aggregated death and hospitalization data by sex and age group for all Alaskans and for Alaska Natives follow:



## Hospitalizations

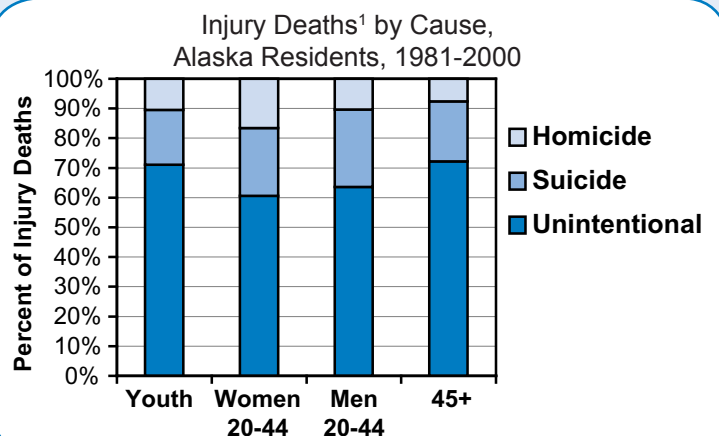


- Between 1994 and 1999, just over 25,000 Alaskans were hospitalized for injuries.
- Of these, approximately 40% occurred among youth 0-19 or women 20-44.
- Women 20-44 have a higher proportion of suicidal injuries than do youth, men 20-44, or people 45 and older.

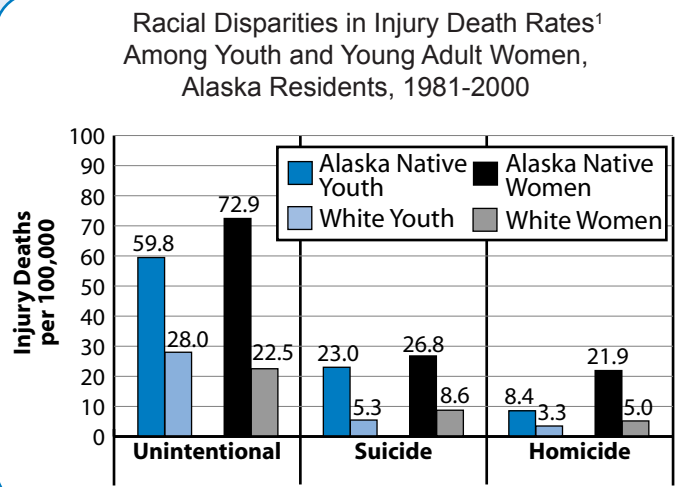


- Alaska Native youth are 2.3 times as likely to be hospitalized for unintentional injury, 4.1 times as likely to be hospitalized for suicide attempt, and 4.5 times as likely to be hospitalized for assault as are White youth in Alaska.
- Alaska Native women 20-44 are 3.1 and 4 times as likely as White women to be hospitalized for unintentional injury and suicide attempt, respectively.
- Alaska Native women 20-44 are 16 times as likely as White women to be hospitalized for assault injuries.

## Deaths



- Between 1981 and 2000, over 10,000 Alaskans died from injuries.
- Of these, almost 30% occurred among youth 0-19 or women 20-44.
- As with injury hospitalizations, unintentional injuries make up the largest proportion of injury deaths for all groups.



- Alaska Native youth (0-19) are 2.1 times as likely to die from unintentional injury, 4.3 times as likely to commit suicide, and 2.6 times as likely to be murdered as are White youth in Alaska.
- Alaska Native women 20-44 are 3.2 times as likely to die from unintentional injury, 3.1 times as likely to commit suicide, and 4.4 times as likely to be murdered as are White women in Alaska.

Data Source: <sup>1</sup>Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics <sup>2</sup>Alaska Trauma Registry

(Note: All data refer to Alaska residents)

### Alaska Injury Prevention Programs

Much of the progress in reducing injuries and injury disparities is likely due to a number of injury prevention programs throughout the state. The agencies and groups responsible for these programs include the following:

Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium [www.anthc.org](http://www.anthc.org)

Alaska H&SS Injury Prevention Program [chems.alaska.gov/ems\\_injury\\_prevention.htm](http://chems.alaska.gov/ems_injury_prevention.htm)

Alaska Injury Prevention Center [www.alaska-ipc.org](http://www.alaska-ipc.org)

Alaska Boating Safety Office [www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/boating/](http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/parks/boating/)

Alaska Suicide Prevention Council [www.hss.state.ak.us/suicideprevention](http://www.hss.state.ak.us/suicideprevention)

Denali Safety Council [www.denalisafetycouncil.org](http://www.denalisafetycouncil.org)

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Alaska Field Office (907) 271-2490

Alaska Fire Marshall's Office [www.dps.state.ak.us/fire/asp/](http://www.dps.state.ak.us/fire/asp/)

Alaska Highway Safety Office [www.dot.state.ak.us/stwdplng/hwysafety/fr\\_safety\\_set.html](http://www.dot.state.ak.us/stwdplng/hwysafety/fr_safety_set.html)

Alaska Department of Public Safety [www.dps.state.ak.us](http://www.dps.state.ak.us)